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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - President Bush to Asia
U.S. Debate - Congressional Vote - Allegations of Torture
PARIS - Monday, November 21, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

President Bush to Asia
U.S. Debate - Congressional Vote - Allegations of Torture

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic social issues dominate today's lead stories: the threat of a national train strike tomorrow, the first stock market quotation of EDF shares and the aftermath of the past few weeks' suburban unrest. The conclusion of the Socialist Party's national congress is featured on the front-page of *Le Figaro* which concludes: "A Unity of Faade" but predicts that the present leader, Francois Hollande, will retain his leadership.

Le Journal du Dimanche carries the latest popularity poll showing that President Chirac loses three percentage points down to 35 percent, while PM Villepin gains five points up to 53 PERCENT.

In international news, President Bush's Chinese trip is featured in *Le Figaro* in a report titled: "In China, Bush Hits the Snag of Human Rights." Philippe Gelie comments: "The U.S. President admonished Beijing about civil liberties and democracy; in return he only got Boeing orders." Muriel Lamotte analyzes the "economic inter-dependency of the two nations," while Jean-Jacques Mevel writes: "The American assaults on democracy worry Beijing. Bush's repeated sermons are accentuating the besieged feeling of the Chinese leadership." In *La Croix*, Francois d'Aloncon comments: "China Resists Bush's Pressures But Buys Boeings." (See Part C)

Le Monde carries on its front page: "Torture: American Intelligence Accused in the U.S. and Around the World." Inside, the article carries a photo of a kneeling and blindfolded detainee. Corine Lesnes writes: "Condemnation of the U.S. intervention in Iraq and what has ensued is spreading in the U.S. and around the world." She comments on the results of the Pew Research Center poll: "The military, with 49 percent of respondents against torture, is generally the most hostile to such practices." In *Le Parisien* Thomas Cataloube titles his report: "Bush More Unpopular Every Day" as he reports on President Bush's falling popularity rates and the Congressional battle. Another feature story looks at Senator MacCain, "the man who triggered the debate on torture." Gilles Delafon in *Le Journal du Dimanche* devotes his commentary to last week's Senate vote: "Concretely, the Congressional rebellion does not change much. But it is a source of concern for the President. The present administration does seem to be collapsing." (See Part C)

The Balkans and the negotiations on a final status for Kosovo are reported in *Liberation* and *Le Figaro* which also interviews the Romanian President, Traian Basescu, on the occasion of his first official visit to Paris: "Europe cannot by itself guarantee its own security. It is not in its interest to have a contentious transatlantic relationship." *Le Figaro* devotes several op-eds to Kosovo: for Isabelle Lasserre, Kosovo is on the way to "an inevitable and dangerous independence," while Monique Papon writes: "Europe cannot tolerate on its doorstep a geographic entity dominated by organized crime and anarchy."

In *Le Figaro* Alexandrine Bouilhet writes about a "mini revolution" in Europe's defense sector: EU Defense ministers will be adopting an "Anglo-Saxon-style code of conduct" to liberalize the "opaque" and "protected" weapons sector.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

President Bush to Asia

"The Human Rights Snag in China"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (11/21): "On several occasions yesterday President Bush had the opportunity of looking his Chinese counterparts in the eye. Each time he

was confronted with the assertiveness of major powers and which has usually been the stance adopted by the Americans. The pickings in Beijing were slim, except for a contract for Boeing. This was a political gesture from Beijing as the trade deficit with Washington continues to grow. Little indeed was achieved in terms of reforms for the Yuan. With so little achieved, it was not surprising then, if as the day progressed, the attacks on human rights became more violent."

"U.S. Assaults on Democracy Worry Beijing"

Jean-Jacques Mevel in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (11/21): "The attacks on civil liberties launched twice by President Bush are a great source of annoyance for Hu Jintao. As if he wanted to make a point, and before the start of the official visit, President Bush began his trip to China with a religious service. The Chinese response was to say that China enjoyed democracy but the message lacked conviction. In fact this is an issue that has the Chinese particularly worried. Human rights were significantly forgotten in the U.S. approach immediately after 9/11, but seem to be back with a vengeance, especially in Congress."

"Bush Torn Between Business Deals and Politics"

Pierre Haski in left-of-center *Liberation* (11/21): "The trade deficit, the Yuan, religious freedom, Tibet and political dissidents: President Bush enumerated all of these questions during the most hectic day of his China trip. He managed results in economic trade but received a firm and definitive 'no' on political issues. The most notable result involved Boeing: Beijing's needs in commercial aviation are huge and China is maneuvering knowingly between the Europeans and the Americans. But on all political issues the polite dialogue was closer to a deaf-mute conversation. On the one hand the U.S. President was playing his habitual role when he attended a religious service. while the Chinese officials listened politely to the U.S. admonitions but without reacting. Hu Jintao's comments about a democratic system 'with Chinese characteristics' was a polite way of telling President Bush to mind his own business."

"China Resists Bush's Pressures But Buys Boeings."

Francois D'Alancon in Catholic *La Croix* (11/21): "Despite the tension between China and the U.S., both nations seem decided to manage their differences pragmatically while developing their partnership: in a gesture aimed at toning down America's concerns on the trade deficit, eight Chinese airlines will be buying 70 Boeing 737s for a total value of 4 billion dollars."

U.S. Debate - Congressional Vote - Allegations of Torture

"Bush Drops, McCain Rises"

Gilles Delafon in right-of-center *Le Journal du Dimanche* (11/20): "Last week in Washington politics seemed to take over. After four years of playing follow the leader, Senators and Congressmen criticized the war on Iraq and more generally the post 9/11 stance as never before. Between the President's falling popularity and the Senate vote, it appears clear that the Americans no longer have faith in their leader. More symbolically, the adoption of the McCain amendment in a nation where 44 percent of the population supports torture is very telling. Congress has chosen to follow McCain rather than the Vice President, contending that the use of torture debases America to the level of its worst enemies. Concretely, this Congressional rebellion does not change much. But for the President it is a serious matter for concern because it signals a change of attitude. While it is usually the midterm election that signals the presidential race, this time it appears that the present administration's collapse has sounded the start of the campaign."

"Bush Increasingly Unpopular"

Thomas Cantaloube in right-of-center *Le Parisien* (11/21): "During his Asian tour, President Bush spent more time defending his position in Iraq than promoting economic cooperation and human rights. With falling popularity ratings, Bush has become a tempting prey for his Democratic adversaries, but also his Republican friends. The war in Iraq and allegations of torture are darkening the President's horizon. The man who has triggered the debate is Senator McCain: after four years of a 'war against terror,' the Americans themselves are questioning their own darkest practices." STAPLETON